

# The Clipper Visits Lorraine Nuss

BY NANCY McCAFFERTY



Lorraine Nuss

"I thumbed my nose at fate and opened on April Fool's Day a year and a half ago," said Lorraine Nuss, who operates the Vendo Nubes Art Gallery. "I gave it considerable thought and decided to name the shop after one of my favorite galleries in Philadelphia." Vendo Nubes means, "I sell clouds," in Spanish.

The gallery itself is a gem, one room with fieldstone running the length of a wall, rounding the corner, and continuing half the distance of the next wall. A small in-wall wooden bookcase frames the shiny white desk next to the floor to ceiling window which floods the room with airy light. A chocolate brown rug adorns the floor, toasting the warm beige walls. The gallery reflects the comfortable sophistication of its creator and although the mailing address is recorded as Depot St., the actual entrance is tucked away on Chestnut St. The walls and center display piece are hung with the achievements of artists from near and far, works both contemporary and traditional.

Lorraine, originally from Philadelphia, has lived in Duxbury for 8 years. She graduated from the Philadelphia College of Art, where she majored in advertising and fashion. For several years, Lorraine worked as a fashion illustrator in her native city. "The work I'm doing now is a natural progression of what I've always done. I can't remember a time when I wasn't drawing." If a visitor looks closely enough, he or she may find Lorraine's signature on some of the art.

She comes from a family of artists. Her sister is a graphic artist, her mother is an artist, and her father is a photographer. "With dad, it was mostly a hobby but it seems he spent 18 years in a darkroom. One day my mother ventured in there, liked what she saw and took up photography, too." Samples of both parents' works have found a home in their daughter's gallery.

"It's amazing how things happen," she said. "I have talked about opening a gallery for so long and the opportunity to rent this place presented itself, so I jumped." Past dealings and volunteer work with several towns' art associations provided her with the contact of artists whose work she admired. These artists put her in touch with other artists. "I attend countless art shows and collect names of those artists I'm interested in. I put my name on mailing lists for notification of showings and exhibits. I also subscribe to art magazines catering to both the creative and informational aspects which keep me up-to-date in this business. When the Boston Watercolor Society held its exhibit at the Art Complex, I found individual pieces which appealed to me. Lanci Valentine, who organized the show was so efficient and supportive that she had the names, addresses and phone numbers of the artists for me the next day."

Most of the art in Vendo Nubes is carried on consignment. It is all original, no mass produced prints. Patrons buy for appreciation of beauty and design and also for investments. The option of setting a price lies with the artist. "It isn't terribly important that a person be technically knowledgeable about a piece, the process behind a silk screen or a watercolor for example. Sometimes people are intimidated by that. The most critical consideration is that the person likes the art, its color, texture, design and style and that they sense they will like it for a long time. Sometimes impulse buying is satisfying in the long run because what struck you about the piece in the first place has staying power. There is so much that's good, such diversity to choose from. The limitlessness of the imagination is remarkable."

Lorraine furnishes an outlet for artists from New Hampshire, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, even India and Haiti. Area artists are also represented. You will delight in viewing the works of Joan Collins, Frank Rogers, Marshall Joyce, Pam and Harry Bernard and Joan Hacker. Randolpho Rocha, whom Lorraine credits as a major talent and her welcome advisor, hangs his art in Vendo Nubes. The handcrafted jewelry of Collin Wilking is on display and Jet Dunn will soon add her creations in jewelry.

Lorraine gave a comprehensive tour of her gallery with an explanation of how various forms of art are composed and although I'll admit all the information didn't find a resting place in my brain (I can't understand why my crayons refuse to stay inside the lines), I have a new appreciation of the exacting demands an artist undergoes to complete his or her project. No more the myth of the mad artist flinging paint at a canvas in his sky-lit loft. It requires patience and persistence. And working with good equipment.

The chances of the consumer over-paying in relation to quality and prominence of the artist is reduced when the art is purchased at an art show or gallery you trust. There are exceptions but generally it is true. Shows insist upon at least 3 judges to grade the work submitted and to select what will go into the show. They can reject work because of quality, obscurity of the artist, or dishonest pricing. Sidewalk art sales are less reliable although it is occasionally possible to find something of worth and character. Usually, the work in a sidewalk sale is done by students or unknown artists, some of whom are on the verge of breaking into the traditional art show-gallery field, but the buyer must use discretion. The regional art shows mentioned by Lorraine are those run by the Cape Cod Art Association, the Art Complex of Duxbury, the South Shore Art Association and the Plymouth Art Association.

Framing is another facet of art to contemplate. Its purpose is not only to enhance the art but to protect it as well. Matting can be decorative and also serves to keep the glass away from the art itself, giving it breathing room. Standard matting and non-glare glass contain acid which, after a number of years, will affect the picture. On something of little value, it doesn't matter so much but on an heirloom or an expensive piece, regular glass and something called

"rag" matting (non-acid mat) is recommended.

Vendo Nubes has expanded its services recently. The purchase of a shrink wrap machine gives artists and other businesses the opportunity to seal their products in a plastic cover much like that on boxed medicine, playing cards and record jackets. (Lorraine refuses to reseal record jackets for obvious reasons). Designing logos for businesses is another accommodation of the gallery. The newest venture for Lorraine is in the field of corporate art. Francis Bernat is her partner in this area. The 2 women search out corporations interested in buying art as an investment or for decorating purposes in a new or existing office building. They choose art or the corporations themselves select art which typifies the image the corporation wants to project. Sculpture for lobbies or lawns is within their scope. They advise where each piece of art should be placed to give a facility the harmony of a finished look.

In a traditional town such as Duxbury, Lorraine has discovered people with a zest for combining the contemporary with the traditional. "It's so refreshing to see," she said. "The color, rather than the subject matter of a picture, becomes the important factor in pulling it all together. It puts life into a setting which might have been written off by the owner because they weren't sure they had the option to go in the mixed direction."

She does sell clouds, translucent, rippling, white clouds piled high, stretched out at ease, billowing clouds. Things of beauty containing the life-giving moisture which make the earth bloom.